

Message Text

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PAGE 01 AMMAN 01699 212008Z
ACTION NEA-10

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INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 5151
AMEMBASSY ATHENS
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA

UNCLAS AMMAN 1699

ATHENS FOR RTDO

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: BEXP, BENC, JO, SY, SA
SUBJECT: HEJAZ RAILWAY STUDY: UPDATE

REF: DAMASCUS 782

1. EMBOFF HAS DISCUSSED STATUS OF HEJAZ RAILWAY STUDY WITH HASHEM TAHER, GOJ UNDERSECRETARY OF TRANSPORT, WHO WITH MOHAMMAD RAJA QOSAINI, DIRECTOR OF DEPARTMENT OF RAILWAYS, REPRESENTS JORDAN ON TECHNICAL COMMITTEE REVIEWING PREQUALIFICATION DATA SUBMITTED FOR HEJAZ RAILWAY STUDY. TAHER GENERALLY CONFIRMED INFORMATION REPORTED REFTEL.

2. ACCORDING TO TAHER, CONSULTANT SELECTED TO PREPARE FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR PROJECT WILL BE DRAWN FROM LIST OF THIRTY-THREE FIRMS NOW UNDER CONSIDERATION.

NINE OF THESE FIRMS ARE AMERICAN:

1. DE LEUW, CATHER
2. MCCORMICK, TAYLOR & ASSOCIATES
3. FORD, BACON & DAVIS

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4. TAMS
5. I.E.C.O.
6. LOUIS BERGER
7. PARSONS, BRINKERHOFF, QUADE, AND DOUGLAS, INC.
8. PULLMAN & SWINDELL
9. INTERNATIONAL BECHTEL.

THE THIRTY-THREE FIRMS ARE TO RESPOND TO QUESTIONNAIRE BY APRIL 1, 1978, AND TECHNICAL COMMITTEE IS TO MEET IN RIYADH BEGINNING APRIL 10 TO PREPARE SHORT LIST. SAUDI REPRESENTATIVES ON COMMITTEE, ACCORDING TO TAHER, FAVOR POINT SYSTEM OF EVALUATING FIRMS, BY WHICH ALL FIRMS SCORING ABOVE MINIMUM NUMBER OF POINTS ARE PLACED ON SHORT LIST REGARDLESS OF NUMBER OF FIRMS THUS SELECTED. JORDANIANS AND SYRIANS PREFER SELECTION OF PRE-DETERMINED NUMBER OF FIRMS. MATTER WILL PRESUMABLY BE DECIDED AT UPCOMING RIYADH MEETING.

3. RAILWAY PROJECT IS TO INCLUDE 1300 KILOMETER LINE FROM MEDINA TO DAMASCUS. (SAUDIS ARE SAID TO BE CONSIDERING SEPARATELY 1300 KILOMETER LINE FROM JIDDA TO RIYADH AND TWO SMALL ADDITIONAL LINKS--JIDDA TO MEDINA AND JIDDA TO MECCA.) TAHER SAID THAT SUBJECT OF FINANCE FOR PROJECT HAD NOT BEEN FORMALLY BROACHED AT LEVEL OF TECHNICAL COMMITTEE, BUT IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT SAUDI FINANCING WOULD BE REQUIRED TO SUPPORT MOST OF COST. RECENT SAUDI NEWSPAPER ARTICLE HAD APPARENTLY ATTRIBUTED TO "JORDANIAN SOURCE" ESTIMATE OF \$1.2 BILLION AS COST OF MEDINA-DAMASCUS RAILWAY. IN DEFERENCE TO SAUDI SENSIBILITIES ON "LEAK", TAHER WAS UNWILLING TO MAKE OWN ESTIMATE OF PROJECT COST, BUT DID CONCEDE THAT ESTIMATE OF \$1.2 BILLION WAS PROBABLY NOT VERY WIDE OF MARK.

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PICKERING

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